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## African Urban Economies: viability, vitality or vitiation? edited by D. F. Bryceson and D. Potts Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Pp. xii+353. £68.00.

J. JOOST BEUVING

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by the international community. In summary, *Economic Dimensions of War and Peace* makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the political and economic dynamics in the DRC that will almost certainly remain pertinent after the holding of the post-transition elections in late 2006. In that regard, this reviewer's impression that the manuscript has taken some time to be published (as is apparent from a lack of reference to more recent events in the Congo) seems to be a minor deficit.

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**African Urban Economies: viability, vitality or vitiation?** edited by D. F. BRYCESON and D. POTTS

Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Pp. xii + 353. £68.00.

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This book, an edited volume which draws from a workshop on 'African Urban Economy' in Leiden (2001), discusses an important topic: urbanisation in contemporary Africa. By presenting several case studies from East and Southern Africa, it aims to shed light on Africa's urban paradox: the coincidence of urban demographic growth amidst economic malaise and strong urbanisation forces in the absence of industrialisation. The introduction presents the central thesis: 'urban growth patterns [in East and Southern Africa] changed due to new demographic and economic factors' (p. 92): falling world market prices for agricultural products, increasing possibilities in the booming informal sector, and the end of civil wars in the region. Consequent in-migration overstretched fragile urban facilities, which led in many cases to a decline in urban life quality.

To substantiate this point, the authors present ten empirical chapters, divided into three sections. The first section, 'City Economies in the Making', presents political economic aspects of the spatial organisation of Maputo, Mombasa and Kampala. The second, with the title 'Urban Livelihoods and Social Dynamics', discusses (shifting) patterns of social and material organisation in Kampala, Nairobi and Mogadishu. The third, entitled 'Urban Welfare, Housing and Infrastructure', identifies changes in settlement and employment practices in Johannesburg, Chitungwiza (Zimbabwe), Gaborone and Dar es Salaam.

In the last part of the volume, the editors reach an interesting conclusion: in contrast to a body of recent studies reporting that rural–urban migration in east and southern Africa remains mostly circular, they claim that 'return migration is precluded for a growing number of second and third-generation urban dwellers who no longer think of rural ancestral areas as their home' (p. 327). Thus African cities are portrayed as being no longer part of a rural–urban network and are instead developing their own momentum, and should, according to the authors, be understood as such. Though this is a challenging thought, it does not entirely convince the reader, which is related to three analytical problems.

First, with the exception of chapters 8 and 11, the empirical chapters of the book mainly rely on census and other quantitative data, and focus on trends and the workings of abstract demographic and economic 'forces'. Concentrating

on the changing structure of urbanisation and migration however obscures the considerations of ordinary Africans to settle or stay in town, or to move back to their rural origins. The authors grapple with this problem, yet without grounding them in the lived experiences of urban – and (de)urbanising – Africans.

Second, while the book is rich in quantitative detail, it does not systematically situate the presented material in broader academic debates. This problem most acutely emerges in the introductory section, which lacks an engagement with older literature on urbanisation in Africa (with the exception of the reference to J. C. Mitchell on p. 37). This strikes the informed reader as odd: these studies have quite convincingly shown that, in addition to the economics of migration, the migration practices of actors cannot be understood outside a cultural framework in which they are produced and have meaning. Though the value orientations shaping migration appear here and there in the case studies, they are not developed into a coherent argument, nor do they reappear in the analytical parts of the book. Thus, the book is less theoretically profound than this important topic justifies.

Third, the book embraces a comparative ideal, which does not contribute to the clarity of the analysis. Principally, this ideal is at variance with the heterogeneity of the selected urban cases. The authors claim that ‘East and Southern Africa constitutes a cohesive geographical region with similar political histories’ (p. 6), yet this is not the impression one gets from the case material, with the contrasting role of the state in Botswana and Tanzania being a case in point. Further, adopting a comparative perspective entails introducing contrasting cases, and it is therefore not clear why the authors left out a discussion on Zambia – widely held to be an interesting example of recent and significant de-urbanisation.

By way of conclusion, the editors of this volume should be complimented for bringing together a number of concise case studies, which cover substantial geographical ground. As such, it offers an analysis of statistical and recent census data, which will certainly be of interest to readers with a general interest in Africa. The reader interested in the sociology of urbanisation in Africa, however, may be left with an appetite for a more detailed analysis of the micro foundations of urban life.

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**Conflict and the Refugee Experience: flight, exile and repatriation in the Horn of Africa** by A. BARIAGABER

Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. Pp.180. £50.00.

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This book outlines the changing face of refugee movements across the Horn of Africa over the last 40 years. It charts the massive rise in numbers of refugees across the region, growing from 6% of Africa's refugees in 1974, to over a half in 1986, and still representing over a third, 1.1 million people, in 2004. This book will be of great value to anyone who is studying the situation of refugees in the Horn of Africa.